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Gems FROM Holmes

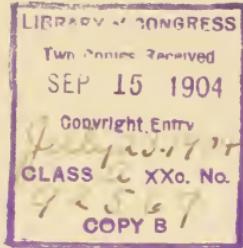




*Gems
from
Holmes*



Boston
De Wolfe Fiske & Co



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De Wolfe Fiske & Co

Boston. 1904.



First Day.

—Don't flatter yourselves that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. On the contrary, the nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become.

Except in cases of necessity, which are rare, leave your friend to learn unpleasant truths from his enemies; they are ready enough to tell them.



The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Second Day.



BUILD thee more stately mansions,
O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler
than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's
unresting sea!

The Chambered Nautilus.

All economical and practical wisdom
is an extension or variation of the
following arithmetical formula: $2 + 2 = 4$.

Every philosophical proposition has the
more general character of the expression
 $a + b = c$. We are mere operatives, empirics
and egotists, until we learn to think in
letters instead of figures.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Third Day.



S to clever people hating each other, I think a little extra talent does sometimes make people jealous. They become irritated by perpetual attempts and failures, and it hurts their tempers and dispositions.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Ah! many lids Love lurks between,
Nor heeds the coloring of his screen;
And when his random arrows fly,
The victim falls, but knows not why.

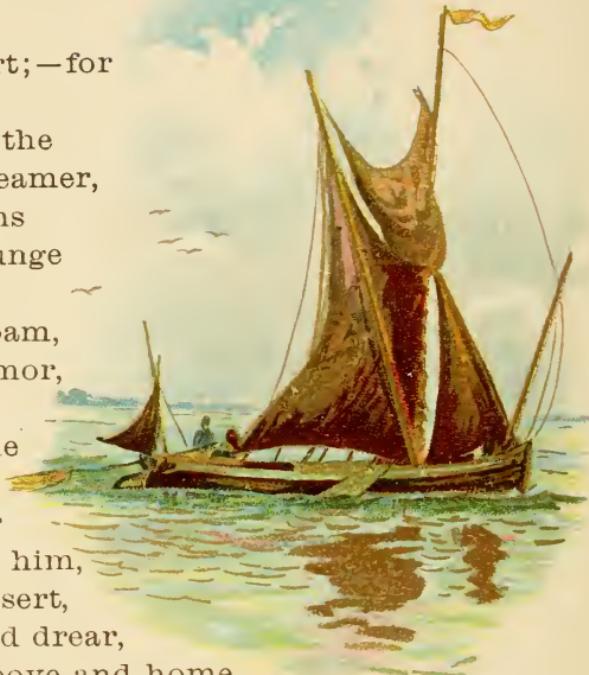
The Dilemma.

O lady! there be many things
That seem right fair, below, above;
But sure not one among them all
Is half so sweet as love;—
Let us not pay our vows alone,
But join two altars both in one.

Stanzas.

Fourth Day.

'Tis here we part;—for
other eyes
The busy deck, the
fluttering streamer,
The dripping arms
that plunge
and rise,
The waves in foam,
the ship in tremor,
The 'kerchiefs
waving from the
pier,
The cloudy pillar
gliding o'er him,
The deep blue desert,
lone and drear,
With heaven above and home
before him.

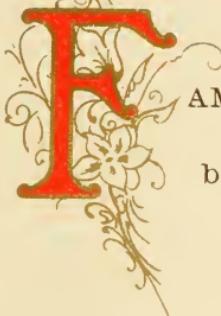


A Good Time Going.

Alas for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them!

The Voiceless.

Fifth Day.



AMILY men get dreadfully homesick. In the remote and bleak village the heart returns to the red blaze of the logs in one's fireplace at home. "There are his young barbarians all at play,"—

if he owns any youthful savages.—No, the world has a million roofs for a man but only one rest.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

At thirty we are all trying to cut our names in big letters upon the walls of this tenement of life; twenty years later we have carved it, or shut up our jack-knives.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Stick to your aim; the mongrel's hold will slip,
But only crowbars loose the bulldog's grip.

Urania.



Sixth Day.

That one
unquestioned
text we read,
All doubt
beyond,
all fear above,
Nor crackling pile
nor cursing creed
Can burn
or blot it:
GOD IS LOVE!

What We All Think.

Seventh Day.

A still, sweet, placid, moonlight face,
And slightly nonchalant,
Which seems to claim a middle place
Between one's love and aunt,
Where childhood's star has left a ray
In woman's sunniest sky,
As morning dew and blushing day
On fruit and blossom lie.

A Portrait.

She knew not love, yet lived in maiden fancies,—
Walked, simply clad, a queen of
high romances,
And talked strange tongues
with angels
in her
trances.

Iris, Her Book.



Eighth Day.



HAT you bring away from
the Bible
depends to some extent on
what you carry
to it.

The Professor at the Breakfast Table.

The gay grisette, whose fingers touch
Love's thousand chords so well;
The dark Italian loving much,
But more than one can tell;

And England's fair-haired,
blue-eyed dame.

Who binds her brow with pearls;—
Ye who have seen them, can they shame
Our own sweet Yankee girls?

Our Yankee Girls.

The axis of the earth sticks out visibly
through the centre of each and every
town and city.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.



Ninth Day.

As o'er the glacier's
frozen
sheet
Breathes soft
the
Alpine
rose,
So,
through
life's
desert
springing
sweet,
The flower
of
friendship
grows.

*A Song of
Other Days.*

Tenth Day.



ORD of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, whose
warmth is love,
Before thy ever-blazing throne
We ask no lustre of our own.

Grant us thy truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for thee,
Till all thy living altars claim
One holy light, one heavenly flame!

A Sun-Day Hymn.

Do you want an image of the human will,
or the self-determining principle,
as compared with its prearranged
and impassable restrictions?
A drop of water—imprisoned in a crystal;
you may see such a one in any
mineralogical collection. One little fluid
particle in the crystalline prism of the
solid universe.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.



Eleventh Day.

People that
make puns
are like wanton
boys that put
coppers on the
railroad tracks.

They amuse themselves
and other children, but
their little trick
may upset a freight train of
conversation for the
sake of a battered witticism.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Our brains are seventy-year
clocks. The Angel of
Life winds them up once for
all, then closes the case, and gives the key
into the hand of the Angel of the Resurrection.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Twelfth Day.



NE of my friends had a little
marble statuette of Cupid
in his country-house,—bow,
arrows, wings, and all complete.
A visitor, indigenous to the region,
looking pensively at
the figure, asked of the
lady of the house "if that was
a statoo of her deceased
infant?"

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Oh, tell me where did Katy live,
And what did Katy do?
And was she very fair and young,
And yet so wicked, too?
Did Katy love a naughty man,
Or kiss more cheeks than one?
I warrant Katy did no more
Than many a Kate has done.

To an Insect.



Thirteenth Day.

I care not much for gold or land;—
Give me a mortgage here and there,—
Some good bank-stock, some note of hand,
Or trifling railroad share;—
I only ask that Fortune send
A little more than I can spend. *Contentment.*

You don't suppose that my remarks made
at this table are like so many postage
stamps, do you,—each to be only once
uttered? If you do, you are mistaken. He
must be a poor creature that does not
often repeat himself.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table

Fourteenth Day.



ON'T ever think the poetry is dead
in an old man
because his forehead is wrinkled,
or that his manhood
has left him when
his hand trembles!

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Where, oh where are the visions of morning,
Fresh as the dews of our prime?
Gone, like tenants that quit without warning,
Down the back entry of time.

Questions and Answers.

“ Boston State-House is the hub of the
solar system. You couldn’t pry that out
of a Boston man if you had the
tire of all creation straightened
out for a crow-bar.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Fifteenth Day.



SIN has many tools, but a lie
is the handle
that fits them all.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Be firm! one constant element
in luck
Is genuine, solid, old Teutonic pluck;
See yon tall shaft; it felt the earthquake's
thrill,
Clung to its base, and greets the sunlight
still.

Urania.

—Buckwheat is skerce and high.—
she remarked.

[Must be a poor relation sponging on our
landlady,—pays nothing,—
so she must stand by the guns and be
ready to repel boarders.]

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Sixteenth Day.

When turning round their dial-track,
 Eastward the lengthening
 shadows pass,
Her little mourners, clad
 in black,
The crickets, sliding
 through the grass,
Shall pipe for her
 an evening
 mass.

At last the rootlets
 of the trees
Shall find the
 prison
where she
 lies,
And bear
the buried dust they seize
 In leaves and blossoms to
 the skies—
So may the soul that warmed
 it rise!

Under the Violets.



Seventeenth Day.



O brag little,—to show well,—
 to crow gently, if in luck,—
to pay up, to own up,
 to shut up, if beaten,
are the virtues of a
 sporting man.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Where, oh where are life's lilies and roses,
 Nursed in the golden dawn's smile?
Dead as the bulrushes 'round little Moses,
 On the old banks of the Nile.

Questions and Answers.

It is better to lose a pint of blood
 from your veins than to have a nerve tapped.
 Nobody measures your nervous force
as it runs away, nor bandages your
 brain and marrow after the operation.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.



Eighteenth Day.

I have been through as many hardships as Ulysses, in the pursuit of my histrionic vocation. I have traveled in cars until the conductors all knew me like a brother. I have run off the rails, and stuck all night in snow-drifts, and sat behind females that would have the window open when one could not wink without his eyelids freezing together.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

But here's to our boyhood, its gold and its gray!
The stars of its Winter, the dews of its May!
And when we have done with our life-lasting toys,
Dear Father, take care of thy children
the Boys.

The Boys.

Nineteenth Day.



ONCEIT is just as natural a thing
to human minds
as a centre is
to a circle.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

I gave her once a locket,
It was filled with my own hair,
And she put it in her pocket
With very special care,
But a jeweler has got it,—
He offered it to me,
And another that is not it
Around her neck I see.

Lines by a Clerk.

What a comfort a dull but kindly person is,
to be sure, at times! A ground-glass shade
over a gas-lamp does not bring more
solace to our dazzled eyes than such a one
to our minds.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Twentieth Day.

O Nature! bare thy loving
breast

And give thy child one hour
of rest,—

One little hour to lie
unseen

Beneath thy scarf of leafy
green!

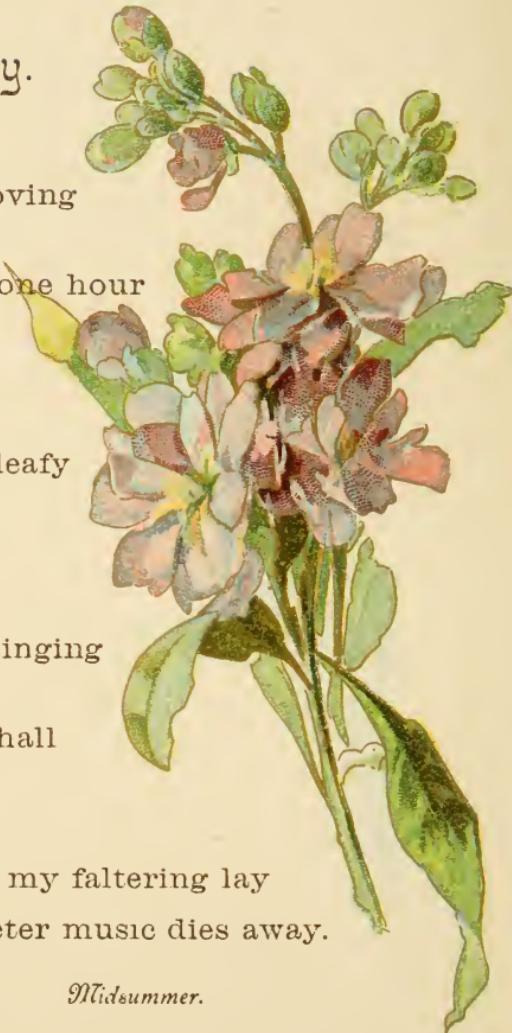
So, curtained by a singing
pine,

Its murmuring voice shall
blend

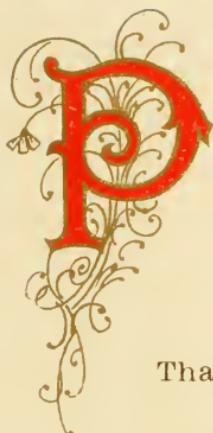
with mine,

Till, lost in dreams, my faltering lay
In sweeter music dies away.

Midsummer.



Twenty-first Day.



PUT not your trust in money,
but put your
money in trust.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

That one unquestioned text we read,
All doubt beyond, all fear above,
Nor crackling pile nor cursing creed
Can burn or blot it:
GOD IS LOVE.

What We All Think.

There stands the old school-house,
hard by the old church;
That tree at its side had the flavor of
birch;
O sweet were the days of his juvenile tricks,
Though the prairie of youth had so many
“big licks.”

Lines.



Twenty-second Day.

—I find the great thing
in this world
is not so much
where
we
stand,
as in
what direction
we are moving.
To reach the
port of Heaven,
we must sail
sometimes with the
wind and sometimes
against it,—
but we must
sail, and not
drift or lie at anchor.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

Twenty-third Day.



HERE lies the home of
school-boy life,
With creeping stair and wind-swept
hall,
And, scarred by many a
truant knife,
Our old initials on the wall.

Mare Rubrum.

I hear the whispering voice of Spring,
The thrush's trill,
the catbird's cry,
Like some poor bird with prisoned wing
That sits and sings, but longs to fly.

Oh for one spot of living green,—
One little spot where leaves can grow—
To love unblamed, to walk unseen,
To dream above, to sleep below!

Spring Has Come.

Twenty-fourth Day.

O my lost Beauty! — hast thou folded quite
Thy wings of morning light
Beyond those iron gates
Where Life crowds hurrying to the haggard Fates,
And Age upon his mound of ashes waits
To chill our fiery dreams
Hot from the heart of youth plunged in his
icy streams.

Wusa.



Twenty-fifth Day.



God bless the ancient Puritans!
Their lot was
hard enough;
But honest hearts make iron arms,
And tender maids
are tough;
So love and faith have formed
and fed
Our true-born Yankee stuff,
And keep the kernel in the shell
The British found so tough.

A Song.

Oh, what are the prizes we perish to win,
To the first little "shiner" we caught with
a pin!
No soil upon earth is so dear to our eyes
As the soil we first stirred
in terrestrial pies!

Lines.



Twenty-sixth Day.

Call him not old, whose
visionary brain

Holds o'er the past its
undivided reign.

For him in vain the envious
seasons roll

Who bears eternal summer in his soul.

If yet the minstrel's song,
the poet's lay,

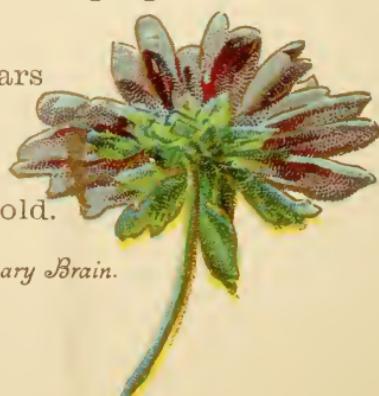
Spring with her birds, or children with their play,

Or maiden's smile, or heavenly dream
of art

Stir the few life-drops creeping round
his heart,—

Turn to the record where his years
are told,—

Count his gray hairs,—they
cannot make him old.



Call Him Not Old, Whose Visionary Brain.

Twenty-seventh Day.

I look upon the fair blue skies,
And naught but empty air I see;
But when I turn me to thine eyes,
It seemeth unto me
Ten thousand angels spread
their wings
Within those little azure rings.

Stanzas.

O for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth
spring!
I'd rather laugh a
bright-haired boy
Than reign a gray-beard
king!
Off with the wrinkled spoils
of age!
Away with learning's crown!
Tear out life's wisdom-
written page,
And dash its trophies down!

The Old Man Dreams.



Twenty-eighth Day.

R

UN, if you like, but try to
keep you breath;
Work like a man, but don't
be worked to death;
And with new notions,—
let me change the rule,—
Don't strike the iron till
it's fairly cool.

Urania.

The Living Temple.



Twenty-
ninth
Day.

Let Friendship's
accents cheer our doubtful
way,

And Love's pure planet lend its
guiding ray,—

Our tardy Art shall wear an angel's wings,
And life shall lengthen with the joy it
brings!

A Sentiment.

How patient Nature smiles at Fame!
The weeds that strewed the victor's way,
Feed on his dust to shroud his name,
Green where his proudest towers decay.

A Roman Acqueduct.

Thirtieth Day.



Y blank check book
seemed to be a dictionary
of possibilities,
in which I could find all the
synonyms of happiness,
and realize any of them
on the spot.

The Professor at the Breakfast-Table.

But when the patient stars look down
On all their light
discovers,

The traitor's smile, the murderer's frown,
The lips of lying lovers,

They try to shut their saddening eyes,
And in the
vain endeavor

We see them twinkling in the skies,
And so they wink forever.

Album Verses.



The very
flowers that
bend and meet,
In sweetening
others,
grow
more
sweet;

The
clouds
by day,
the stars
by night,
Inweave
their floating
locks of light.
The rainbow,
Heaven's own
forehead's
braid,

Is but the embrace of sun
and shade.

The Philosopher to His Love.

Thirty-first Day.

E

VERY event that a man
would master must be
mounted on the run,
and no man ever caught the reins
of a thought except
as it galloped by him.

The Professor at the Breakfast-Table.

Shalt thou be honest? Ask the worldly schools,
And all will tell thee knaves are busier fools;
Prudent? Industrious? Let not modern pens
Instruct "Poor Richards," fellow-citizens.

Urania.

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,
Let them smile as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

W 13 *The Last Leaf.*





